THE SHAKERITE

Volume 96 // Issue 4

Feb. 28, 2026

IC Students, Staff Wonder Where They'll be Next Year

pages 6–7

3
IB English for all

4
Bad Bunny unites

8
Elevator escapades

9
Meet the coach

THE SHAKERITE
Feb. 28, 2026
Volume 96, Issue 4

Gun Violence is Inevitable, but Normalizing it is Another Danger

ISABEL SIEGEL
Editor in Chief

I'm sick of writing about gun violence. It follows me, though. Over my four years at The Shakerite, I've reported breaking news stories on the aftermath of shootings in our community. As an Editorial Board member, I've argued passionately for increased security at the high school. But I'm here writing about gun violence again, despite the redundancy, because it continues to impact my life, my communities and the places I go. I know it will continue to.

On Dec. 13, I was glued to the screen all night as I watched news coverage of the Brown University shooting, hanging onto every live update. The shooter, later identified as Cláudio Manuel Neves Valente, killed two students and wounded nine after entering a campus building during an exam review session. I was supposed to receive a decision on my early application to Brown in two days; but suddenly, my anxieties about college and the future seemed minimal and insignificant.

The next morning, I woke up to news of another shooting – this one having occurred on Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. Two gunmen had killed 15 people during a Hanukkah celebration, including a 10-year-old girl. Later, during my own weekend Hanukkah get-together, I heard family members discussing the shooting, and I saw how it dampened our celebrations. The Monday after that weekend, I walked into school overwhelmed and defeated.

A few days later, I found out that I'd been accepted into Brown. Now, two months later, Brown has launched its "Ever True" program, a recovery effort intended to provide mental health support, build community and increase security measures. Watching Brown students, faculty and families come together in the aftermath of violence has been inspiring, and I remain excited every day to join its community in the fall.

Still, the events of December live in my mind.

I am leaving one landscape that has been repeatedly affected by gun violence for another that is reeling in its aftermath. I will never escape the constant paranoia that accompanies intense arguments and loud bangs; I'll always look for the nearest exit sign.

When we visited Brown's campus in October, my mom said that it felt like a "safe bubble." But bubbles don't exist. Death by gunshot is universal. I hate hearing people say, "That would never happen here" or "That would never happen to me." It affects all of us, and it will affect all of us if we don't take action – from Shaker Heights to Providence to Bondi Beach; high schools to colleges to restaurants to malls to beaches.

But I know that I picture myself at the forefront of protests and action in college. Viewing this issue through a reporter's lens has given me confidence in the change that we can create; I know that words have power. I acknowledge that I'm among the lucky humans who have not been shot or witnessed someone being shot — and I don't want to be content in viewing these issues passively by scrolling through social media or watching TV coverage.

Because our generation grew up this way — constantly inundated by the news of mass shootings —we can create change. We know what it's like to live through these events. We can't grow desensitized. Every time gun violence occurs, we must express outrage. Normalizing horror is the biggest danger.

The Raider Academy space at SHHS, where students complete online courses to earn graduation credits. At the Innovative Center for Personalized Learning, where students can receive one-on-one instruction and pursue personal projects, such as writing a book, recording music or completing research, to earn required credits.

In This Issue

6-7
Is the IC on the move?
The Innovative Center for Personalized Learning may have a new home next year — but at this time, it's not clear where. Students, teachers and administrators weigh in on a potential relocation to SHHS.

3
IB English
Next year, all juniors must take an IB English course, whether they are DP students or not.

4
Good Bunny
SHHS embraces Bad Bunny's Super Bowl performance and unifying message.

5
Life Support
The Editorial Board demands a plan for addresssing the building's accelerating decline.

9
New Leader
Get to know the high school's new football coach, alumnus Andre Griffin ('97).

10-11
ROM
Learn about February's Raiders of the Month, Chris Cunningham and Joelle Burge.

On the Cover

ALISON TEETER
Design Managing Editor

I'm an IC student. The Innovative Center for Personalized Learning has given me a space within my broader high school education to pursue my own interests in my own way — be it developing definitions of "fascism," nerding out over American blues music or researching the intersections of linguistics and epistemology — with the support of educators and like-minded peers.

The core identity of the IC comes from this freedom to shape one's own education. And while the current IC space has been conducive to this freedom, a change in location doesn't necessarily mean a change in identity, but there needs to be a plan.

Administrators I've asked about a potential plan have given me wildly different answers, from dismissing talks of a move to the Raider Academy space as nothing more than rumors to indicating that such "rumors" are the most likely course of action. But they ultimately all say the same thing: "We're talking about it."

That's frustratingly reminiscent of "concepts of a plan."

Whatever these discussions are, whoever the "we" having them is, administrators owe it to IC students, families and staff to move them out from behind closed doors and develop a plan alongside the people most affected by their outcomes. Scheduling season is upon us — shouldn't students know where they will take their classes?

THE SHAKERITE
Volume 96 // Issue 4
Feb. 28, 2026

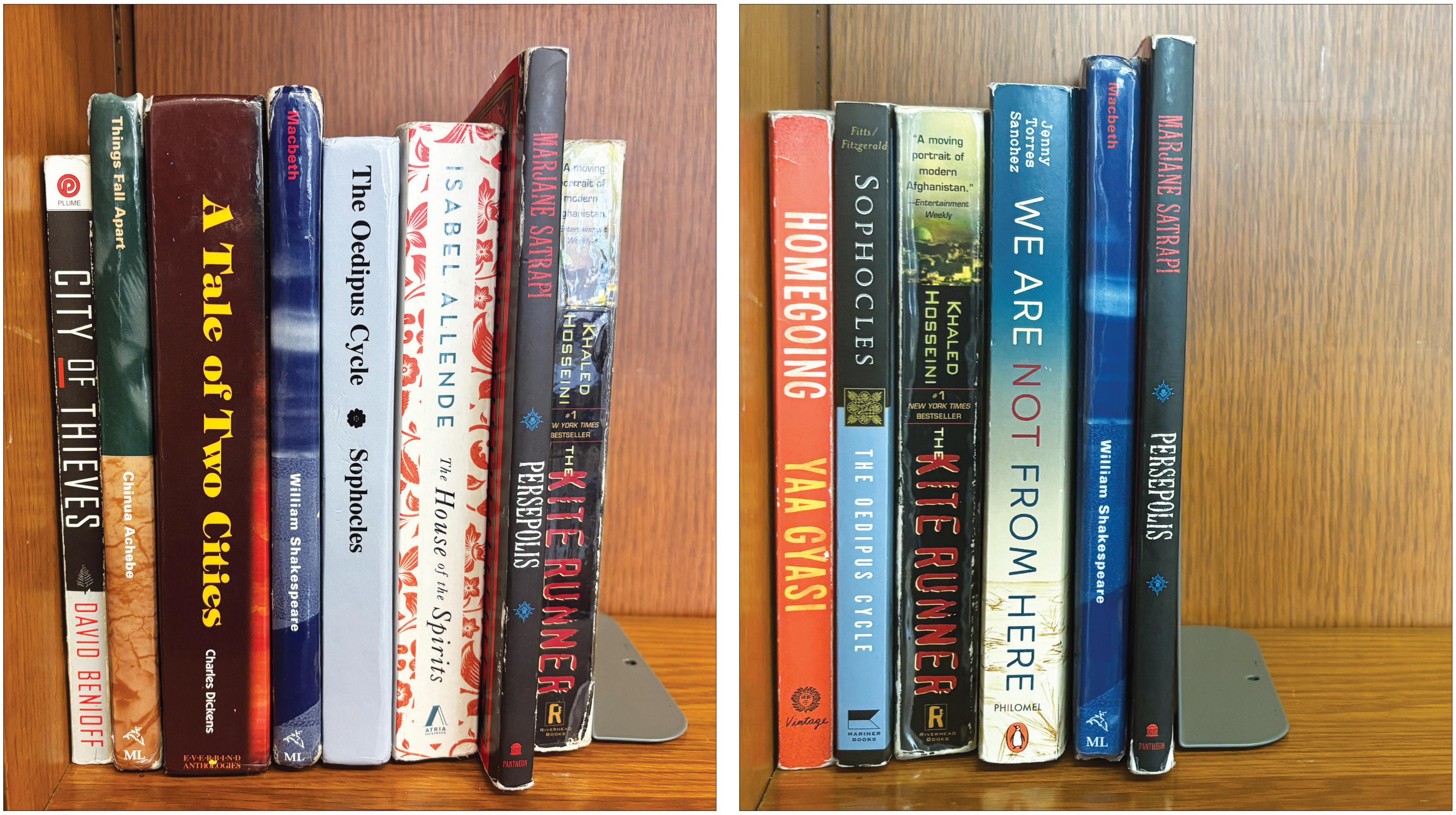
IC Students, Staff Wonder Where They'll be Next Year
pages 6-7

3 IB English for all
4 Bad Bunny unites
8 Elevator escapades
9 Meet the coach

Alison Teeter

The Innovative Center for Personalized Learning, commonly called "the IC," has been housed in the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building on Lee Road, in space leased from the city, since it was created in 2014. District officials would not say whether it will relocate next year.

NEXT YEAR, IT'S IB FOR ALL JUNIORS



Photos by Camryn Dozier

On the left are the texts juniors currently study in 11 Advanced/IB HL Literature class, which will continue next year as IB Literature HL. On the right are texts current juniors study in 11 Language and Literature, which will be replaced next year by IB Language and Literature SL. Some of the current 11 Language and Literature texts may remain in next year's new SL course. Juniors who don't select the IB Literature HL course will also analyze non-literary works, such as films and photos, in the SL course.

New standard level IB language and literature course will be default option going forward

NATALIE BETTER
Copy Editor

Starting next school year, all juniors must take an IB-aligned English Language and Literature course.

Juniors can no longer choose between IB and non-IB English courses. Instead, they must choose between IB Language and Literature SL and the IB Literature HL course, known now as 11 Advanced/IB Literature HL.

"SL is going to have elements that are much more rigorous than the current 11 Language and Literature course," English Department Chairwoman Emily Shrestha said.

The change does not eliminate the two-year IB Literature HL course, which all IB diploma program students have been required to complete. Instead, IB Language and Literature SL creates both a course for all non-IB DP juniors and an alternative for those who want the IB diploma but do not want the workload or analytical depth required in IB Literature HL.

"You were stuck in this higher-level English course because there were no other options," Shrestha said. "This change allows us to keep the HL course, which is the high-level analytical writing that involves big, fat books and metaphors," she said, "but it also allows now for a standard evel course, for the students who are maybe more STEM oriented, that want the diploma, but not necessarily the rigor that goes along with the HL course."

The IB Language and Literature SL course is designed as a two-year program. However, after completing the 11th-grade year, students may choose not to complete the second year as seniors and instead enroll in non-IB senior English courses, including AP Language and Composition, AP Literature and Composition and 12 Language and Literature.

IB Diploma Program Coordinator Laura Hartel said students will not be expected to navigate the new course alone because existing structures — including counselors, intervention specialists and English teachers — will remain in place. She said students who do not pursue the full IB diploma but remain in the class as seniors are not required to take the IB exam at the end of the two-year SL sequence.

The IB Language and Literature SL curriculum emphasizes communication across different types of texts. Students will analyze infographics, screenplays and advertising campaigns to "look at what the theme is and then how that connects to some bigger issue in the world," Shrestha said. Unlike HL which focuses on traditional literature.

"We're still going to read novels. We're still going to read plays. We're still going to look at poetry. Those are the literary texts. "

Emily Shrestha

Shrestha said that although the SL course includes "non-literary units," students should not assume that the course will not require them to read literature. "We're still going to read novels. We're still going to read plays. We're still going to look at poetry. Those are the literary texts," she said. But students are also going to "look at a photographer's body of work and how the photographer uses the theme of child soldiers, or innocence in war," she added.

"It's going to be different. It's going to be sort of that artsy angle that is fun to do, but it's also something that not everybody is comfortable with," Shrestha said.

HL students will still read plays, poetry, novels and graphic novels.

English teacher Nalin Needham, who currently teaches 11 Language and Literature, said the new course will provide more flexibility for teachers. "It puts emphasis on texts that a lot of kids are going to encounter in the real world — non-literary texts and a lot of things that aren't pure literature," he said. Such texts will be more engaging for students, he said. "Some texts are starting to feel a bit stale", he said, so "this will be a nice change of pace as a teacher."

Bad Bunny, also known as Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, performs during halftime of Superbowl LX at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California Feb. 8. He is the first artist to deliver the halftime show in Spanish, and he concluded the performance by leading a parade of flags representing countries from North, Central and South America.

Chris Graythen // Getty Images

TOGETHER

SHHS embraces Bad Bunny's Super Bowl music, message of unity among the Americas

SPORTS WRITING REPORTERS

Singing in sugarcane fields, surrounded by flags of the North and South American countries and people donning pavas, Bad Bunny depicted everyday life in Puerto Rico while advocating for unity and equality.

"It made me cry," said Principal Isaiah Wyatt, who is half Puerto Rican. "My grandmother passed, so for me to see the story that he was telling was me in those spaces with my grandmother."

Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, the Puerto Rican-born singer and songwriter known as Bad Bunny, was the number one artist in listening charts last year. Bad Bunny's halftime show broke the NBC record with a peak of 137.8 million viewers.

In recent years, the NFL has made a push to expand the league's viewership to a wider demographic. Playing games in Europe and South America and diversifying halftime performances are among the league's strategies.

Jesse Collins, an Emmy-winning TV producer, and Roc Nation, an entertainment company founded by Jay-Z in 2008, chose six-time Grammy Award winner Bad Bunny to be this year's halftime show performer.

Every other NFL halftime show has been performed predominantly in English; however, Bad Bunny primarily sings in Spanish, which prompted positive feedback from the Shaker community. "Yeah, it was fire because he was the first Latino singer singing in the NFL halftime show," said senior Valentino Jimenez, a bilingual student who speaks Spanish at home.

Dr. Chuck Kelly, an English teacher, taught in Puerto Rico for 11 years. He said that the language barrier shouldn't impact people's ability to understand the meaning of the performance. "It's rhythm, it's music, it's a celebration, it's a party. You don't have to listen to every single word of a song to get the message behind it," Kelly said.

President Donald Trump did not support Bad Bunny's performance, and denounced the show on Truth Social, calling it "an affront to the Greatness of America." Bad Bunny is a vocal critic of the Trump administration, and most recently declared, "ICE out" while accepting a Grammy award, referring to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"I know that Bad Bunny is speaking against ICE and the current government," Jimenez said.

Turning Point USA, a conservative activist organization, hosted an alternative "All-American Halftime Show" to protest Bad Bunny's performance, where singer Kid Rock performed. Turning Point USA's program drew 6.1 million views. Bad Bunny's performance had 137.8 million.

Wyatt said he does not support the decision to host a separate halftime show. "I don't think that's the right thing to do. I believe in supporting all of us," he said.

Bad Bunny's halftime show featured plenty of symbolism. For example, he climbed and sat on top of a damaged electricity pole to sing "El Apagón," a song released in 2022 about Puerto Rico's frequent power outages, which have persisted since Hurricane Maria damaged the island's power infrastructure in 2017. Actions by the first Trump administration hindered repair of the power grid. After the song "NUEVAYoL," Bad Bunny handed a child actor who represented his younger self — dressed similarly to an old photo of the singer — his recently-won Grammy award for Album of the Year.

Kelly noted the significance of the pava hats worn by dancers during the medley's opening number, "Titi Me Preguntó." "I don't know if everyone understands this, but those straw hats people wore, they're called pava, and pava are woven from palm trees, and they are generally worn by the farmers of the country center who helped build up Puerto Rico," he said.

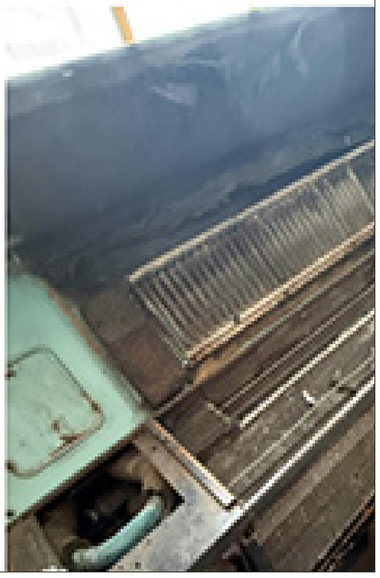
"They would be people who work the earth, the people who are working class. They are people who don't make bundles of money, and they're celebrated in Puerto Rico as national heroes of the common man. They're heroic in Puerto Rico."

The show closed with an obvious symbol: flags of every American country and territory. Senior Ari Feinberg said the flags called for unity. "I think it's interesting to think that it's not, like, us versus them. I think there's a lot of rhetoric that it's like the U.S. versus these other countries, but we're all in the same continent and in the same region," Feinberg said.

The unifying message wasn't lost on Kelly. "What he illustrated was that we're not America alone. We're America with North America, Central America, South America — we're all America," Kelly said.

Said Wyatt, "We are stronger together."

Sports Writing Reporters Trinity Littlejohn, Will Burdsall, Jacob Dickas, Sha'Leia Goins, Janiyia Ford and Brycen Pritchett reported this story.



District Buildings Are Showing Their Age

The district canceled classes at Lomond Elementary School Feb. 18 after a pre-renovation visit from structural engineers revealed foundational damage on the building's northeast corner near the parking lot entrance to the school.

Class was canceled Feb. 19 as well as teachers and staff scrambled to pack up affected classrooms and move them to other locations in the building.

An email sent to Lomond families and staff said, "Engineers have recommended Lomond students and staff be removed from the affected area until shoring work can stabilize the foundation." The necessary repairs may cause the affected corner of the building to close for the remainder of the school year.

Lomond, like all district elementary schools, now includes fifth-grade classes, which moved out of Woodbury Intermediate School this year. Woodbury is the second district school to undergo renovation in the district's plan to update all pre-K through eighth-grade buildings. The district did not include the high school in that plan or in the bond issue voters approved to fund it.

If engineers were to evaluate the high school building, what would they find?

HOW WILL OUR AILING BUILDING SURVIVE?

Our school is on life support.

Black mold seeps through ceilings, occasionally dripping on students, their belongings and class materials. Roof, radiator or plumbing leaks have plagued Rooms 153, 154, 155, as well as the Writing Center in Room 228, The Shakerite newsroom in Rooms 229 and 231, and Room 230.

Students experience extreme temperatures almost daily across the school. Classrooms in the front hallway of the first floor regularly have inadequate or no heat; temperatures reach both hot and cold extremes. To cope with the cold, teachers have brought in their own space heaters, which are incapable of warming a classroom. This year, the district has rented commercial space heaters, which teachers in the affected rooms share. Room 153 got the best of both worlds — black mold, extreme heat, freezing cold, space heater and a few loose ceiling tiles.

'Rite Idea

The large auditorium pumped out cold air for about two weeks after winter break while outdoor temperatures were in the single digits, making the massive space frigid — not to mention the arctic air that poured in through the two auditorium doors that remain unrepaired after a truck crashed into them six years ago. The large auditorium is also the site of several failing lights and a hole in the ceiling that leaks water.

The small auditorium is no stranger to temperature troubles, either; students who have study hall there suffered temperatures that fluctuated from 87 to 90 degrees after winter break.

In September, October and November, the elevator connecting the basement and the first, second and third floors was frequently out of service, then repaired, then out of service again. Students with disabilities or injuries who couldn't take the stairs had to use the inconvenient, dirty freight elevator in Room 110, or attend class from the library. Now, in February, emails notifying staff of yet another round of elevator failures have resumed, not to be confused with emails announcing the closure of restrooms for plumbing emergencies.

On the topic of emergencies, falsely triggered fire alarms caused by system errors sounded five times Dec. 15, sending students into 17-degree weather that felt like 2 degrees with the wind chill. Water leaks and frozen pipes have also triggered false alarms, sending students into downpours and frigid weather.

In February, a pipe froze and burst in Room 161's radiator, flooding the classroom before the start of school. Morning classes in that classroom were relocated while custodians and maintenance workers addressed the problem.

Meanwhile in the Shakerite newsroom, tiles said goodbyes to the ceiling, nearly hitting editors before shattering on PCs and the floor. A parade of tiles in the science wing also crashed through the ground and landed in a first-floor classroom.

Shaker Heights High School is degrading by the day. What's the solution?

Until now, bandages for major injuries have been the norm. Students wear coats to fend off the large auditorium cold. Students in the small auditorium refilled their water bottles to combat the sauna-like effects. Ceiling tiles are replaced, black mold is sealed with paint, and we all go about our days. But the conditions remain, and they flare up frequently. Attending to the building has become a game of Whac-A-Mole for custodians, maintenance staff, service companies and the fire department.

The Editorial Board can't offer a solution — that falls on our administration. We urge the school board and upper administration to visit the high school for a guided tour of the building's maladies. The administration's attention should not be aimed solely at elementary building renovations; focus on our building's failing systems, and make something happen.

These aren't just complaints fueled by inconvenience. If we don't do something to fix our building, these failures will harm people, or make it impossible to hold school. At what point do we cancel school due to frigid temperatures in classrooms? When will a space heater overheat, spark and start a fire? Will the next falling ceiling tile injure a student, or will the next burst pipe scald someone? Will someone slip on the ice, or on wet floors, when needlessly evacuating for an alarm?

Students will graduate and leave this building, but there are more to come — and, despite retirement incentives, much of the staff is here to stay. What's the plan to get this building off of life support?

IF THE IC MOVES TO SHHS, WILL ITS SOUL COME, TOO?

Although the district won't say if relocation is a sure thing, the high school's Raider Academy could be the IC's new home, and people wonder how unique programs would share a space meant for 30 students

CLAIRE JOYCE
Copy Editor

Next year, students who enroll in the IC will attend school somewhere.

At this time, it's not clear where.

The district is considering relocating the Innovative Center for Personalized Learning into the high school's Raider Academy space, and the proposal has sparked concern among teachers and students who say such a shift could fundamentally alter how the program operates.

The IC operates as a micro school within the high school population and serves students seeking a non-traditional high school experience. Located on the lower level of the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building at 3450 Lee Road, the program emphasizes personalized, project-based learning that gives students control over "when, where, how and what they learn" as they work toward graduation and post-secondary goals, according to the district website. "Officially designated as a blended-learning model, the IC allows students to complete coursework through a mix of online learning and in-person projects, with students spending at least 51 percent of their week on campus and up to 49 percent off campus through internships, community partnerships, college credit plus classes and other learning opportunities," the website states.

The Raider Academy, located next to the south gym, is an alternative high school program designed to support students who require online credit recovery or a more structured pathway to graduation. The program serves primarily juniors and seniors and focuses on pacing students through required coursework.

Discussions about relocating the program among administrators, IC teachers and program coordinators unfolded over several meetings during the fall and have still not resulted in the communication of a final decision to IC students and families.

Superintendent David Glasner said the district is "planning thoughtfully for the future of the Innovative Center. While we have not yet made a decision on its location for next year, we will continue to focus on how to best meet the needs of our students in our plans." Glasner said that options at the high school main campus are being considered, including the Raider Academy.

Glasner said that the district is continuing to plan for the IC for the coming years. "As far as the lease, we do have a lease with the City for the Stephanie Tubbs Jones space and we are working closely with the City on the plan for next year. I don't have the details of the lease terms, however," he said. He did not confirm whether the district plans to renew the lease next year.

"Whatever happens, we need a clear plan, a lot of communication, and input from all stakeholders to make this go smoothly," IC math teacher Chris Mattern said.

"It's very fluid here. It's a very different learning environment," Mattern said. "For people who want a little bit more control over what it is they're learning and how they learn. That's a lot of what we do."

For example, students have earned English credits by writing and publishing books of fiction and poetry. Another student earned a History of Music credit by arranging versions of traditional American blues songs and recording an album.

There are 57 students currently enrolled in the Raider Academy, and 36 enrolled in the IC. According to Raider Academy Program Coordinator Shaunetta Tucker, the Raider Academy space can hold up to 30 students at a time. Raider Academy students are split into two groups; one group attends in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. Tucker said that students are scheduled individually based on "specific academic needs, credit status, and post-secondary goals."

When students are not in the Raider Academy space, their schedules differ based on individual needs. Tucker said that some attend regular core and elective classes, some participate in work-study or career-based learning, and some engage in alternative programming or post-secondary readiness activities.

"The goal of this rotation model is to provide structured academic support while allowing students to continue participating in other required classes and individualized pathways," Tucker said.

Mattern said that while the IC and the Raider Academy both aim to support students who may struggle in traditional settings, they serve different populations and rely on different instructional approaches. "I think from some perspectives, they've looked the same. So people think that they are the same, so they should combine, but they don't really combine," Mattern said. "We serve different purposes for different students for different reasons. People who come to us do not go to Raider Academy for the same reasons."

IC student Brycen Wolf said that he spends half of his day at the IC. "I typically am at the IC for about four hours in the morning and then spend the rest of the day at home. Throughout this time I usually complete any given assignments. I am fully at the IC and not split between the IC and high school like many other students so my schedule is different than other IC students," he said.

IC student Anna Maier said that she spends her morning on the high school main campus and arrives at the IC slightly after 4/5 period. "My friends won't start arriving for another half hour, so I pick a subject to focus on. After that, my friends start arriving, so I check in with them and eat my lunch," she said. "After lunch I like to check in with my teachers to make sure I am on pace and that we are on the same page. At 1:30, I have my math meeting with my math teacher, which is basically one on one tutoring for my math work — not required, but I find it helps me to stay on track and fully grasp the concepts. The rest of my day is focused on independent study for my IC coursework, but I never feel isolated because my teachers are always available to answer any questions I have."

Tucker said that the Raider Academy is flexible in its approach to helping students. "We look at what the needs of a student are first so we can see how we can support them the most in this environment," she said.

She said that she would not be concerned if the Raider Academy combined with the IC. "It will be a win-win for students as long as we work out the logistics," she said. "It will open up other programs currently offered at the IC that are not available at the RA. The RA includes a virtual curriculum, which can be progressed if combined with the IC's project-based curriculums to broaden student opportunities."

Tucker said that the Raider Academy mainly comprises seniors, and that the transition would be the "fresh start of a new program with a fresh set of students." She said that students are her first priority in a potential merge. "We want to make sure that students are going to be OK with this transition," she said.

Daniel Carroll

The high school's Raider Academy space accommodates 36 students. This year, 57 students, mostly seniors, pursue graduation credits online there on a rotating schedule. When not working in the Raider Academy space, they take classes in the high school and participate in work-study or career-readiness activities. The IC, which has existed off campus at the city's Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building on Lee Road since its inception in 2014, has 36 students enrolled this year and four IC teachers, who provide individualized instruction. IC students say they worry that moving to the high school would alter the IC culture.

The IC's current space comprises two main rooms where students and teachers work, a smaller instructional room, offices, bathrooms, a kitchen and a "quiet room" where students can take breaks.

Mattern said that the IC building does have limitations, and that teachers have raised concerns about emergency preparedness and accessibility, including the lack of necessary personnel on the premises. "If the IC were to move, one of the benefits would be being closer to all of the other things we don't have here, like the nurse, administrators, counselors, lunches — some of those details that aren't the education or the classroom," Mattern said. Assistant Principal Katie Slifkin is currently the IC assistant principal.

However, Mattern said he is concerned about the IC operating in a different facility. "A lot of the space is conducive to keeping that environment, and if the space is not selected well, or if the space changes drastically, then some of that could be lost," Mattern said.

IC Language and Literature teacher Amanda Woolley also said that the Raider Academy and IC serve different purposes. "The thought of combining, it's like oil and water. In my mind, it just doesn't work," she said.

Woolley said that communication about the transition will be essential for IC students and parents. "The parents and the families of the IC are so involved. They care so deeply about this program, and they've seen it change their kids for the better, which is why we are really pushing for communication to the families as soon as possible with any detail," she said.

IC student Luvirt Parker said that the IC has benefited his high school experience. "The IC has given me significantly more control over how I do my work and how fast I do it. Of course, I still have to adhere to due dates, but there is a level of flexibility that the IC gives its students that the high school can't," he said.

He said that the IC shouldn't move to the main campus. "It contradicts the point of the IC. We use the IC building as a medium to explore student ideas and to push how far we can take a single idea. If we're stuffed in the corner of this already chaotic high school, I don't think we'll have the same opportunities to do what the IC is here to do. Plus, the IC already consistently runs the risk of becoming a glorified study hall. The only way in my eyes to make sure that doesn't happen is to keep allowing students to make amazing projects in an inviting and comfortable environment," he said.

Maier said that the IC shouldn't change locations. "I don't think the IC should move to the Raider Academy. I am worried about the future of the program if it moves to the main campus," she said. "I really do think the IC would change. I think so many students, myself included, have partially gone to the IC to get away from the hustle and bustle of the main campus. Placing the IC at the main campus does not give that separation."

"I think that the IC serves a lot of our students as their safe space and their safe haven. Some of which choose the IC because compared to the main campus it makes them feel so much more safe, calm and secure," Woolley said. "With the move potentially being back to the main campus, there's a lot of students that could be affected negatively in a way because they see the space that we are in now as a safe space and main campus as not."

Parker also said that he prefers the environment of the IC. "The environment there is positive and not silently depressing like the high school. Plus, I enjoy not hearing about a new fight every day," he said.

"For me, the traditional format of classroom learning never really worked, especially in math and science," he said. "I would find myself constantly zoning out and getting lost in all the numbers and variables. Keeping up was incredibly difficult for me. My teachers simply moved too fast for me."

Maier also said that the IC offered her more personalized learning. "At the main campus, I felt like I was a small fish in a really, really big ocean, and I felt as though I was being viewed as a student, rather than a whole person. At the IC, student to teacher ratios are intentionally small, which not only helps with the feedback cycle of work common at the IC, but also with teacher-student relationships," she said.

Dr. John Moore, director of curriculum and instruction, said that when considering the specialized services and resources that students receive at the IC, he reviews the district's equity policy. "In this case, I rely on what it describes as targeted universalism: school-based programs and opportunities will be designed and implemented using targeted universalism," he said. "Said programs and opportunities must be accessible to all students, but can, and in some cases should, be targeted to provide specific supports for select students to achieve or exceed the district's universally high goals."

"Not every student in Shaker needs or gets the same resources, but we hope to target them where needed and then evaluate how effective we've been at addressing the need. I see the IC in that same vein — a targeted support," he said.

Maier said that IC students haven't been authentically included in conversations about a relocation. "I feel like students have been asked for their opinions, but I feel as though our opinions have not been seriously considered," she said.

However, Wolf said that the transition could benefit the program. "I think moving could potentially spread the word about the IC and attract more students. In my opinion, that would be a positive thing and give more students the opportunity to experience and benefit from the program," he said.

Maier said that more enrollment in the IC, however, could change the program's structure. "I think the program is getting more attention is a very complex issue. I think many students would benefit from having an IC-style learning environment, but the learning environment relies heavily on low student-to-teacher ratios," she said. "More attention and enrollment in the IC would require hiring more teachers to keep the ratio."

Maier said that she still plans to take classes at the IC, even if its location changes.

"I do think this change would make it more difficult to stay, but between having no IC and IC at main campus, I think the majority would choose the IC at main. Location of the IC does matter, but the community of the IC is really the thing that makes it so special. I plan to stay," she said.

Mattern said that decisions must be made soon. "It's scheduling season, and everyone should know what's going on so that they can schedule with a full understanding," he said. Counselor meetings with students to create next year's schedule are underway and will conclude Feb. 27 with eighth grade.

"I'm afraid that the IC will lose both its district support and its soul in the transfer," Maier said.

Wolf said that he wants more communication regarding the IC. "I'd like a clear explanation of the reasons behind potentially moving the IC. The answer I'd hope for would be one that outlined why they are considering the move and how it would likely affect IC students," he said.

The district would only confirm that the high school main campus is under consideration to house the IC and did not reply to a question about whether it could remain at the Stephanie Tubbs Jones building next year.

Slifkin said that discussions regarding the IC's location next year are ongoing. "We look for opportunities that best meet the needs of our students and provide as many resources and opportunities as possible. With this planning, administration is discussing the location of the IC, and we are working collaboratively with teachers and students to obtain feedback," she said.

"These discussions have remained just that — discussions about what is best for our students and how we can support them with all available resources to be successful."

Journalism II Reporter Arabella Kielbasa contributed to this story.

When Boys Say Harming Girls is OK, We Must Speak Up

JAI'DA WHITLOW
Journalism II Reporter

I think he was right for putting his hands on his girlfriend. Sometimes you gotta put these girls in check."

Jai'Da Whitlow

I won't name the student who said this in one of my classes; he's one of thousands who could have done it. I'm not overreacting — these comments can lead to horrific acts. According to a Feb. 11 FBI report on U.S. law enforcement data, there were "more than 11,000 domestic violence murder victims and an additional 1.1 million victims of domestic violence" from 2020 through 2024, and "nearly 75 percent of the victims were female." The FBI analysis also found more than 70,500 incidents of teen relationship violence in 2024. From July 2024 through June 2025, there were 157 deaths in Ohio due to intimate partner violence.

What frightened me most about that student's comment wasn't just the words, but how comfortable he was expressing them publicly. That confidence doesn't emerge randomly; it comes from a culture that shrugs at disrespect, laughs it off or uses excuses like "That's just how he is."

Left unchecked, these words are normalized. Comments like these are often dismissed as dark humor, but language is never harmless. Words shape beliefs, and beliefs shape society, which polices women's actions while excusing men's aggression.

When students hear no comeback to harmful comments, they learn that silence equals approval. Speaking up doesn't always mean an argument. Sometimes it's as simple as a "That's not OK." Challenging a harmful joke can stop children from inheriting attitudes that excuse violence. Even choosing not to laugh, not to agree, sends a message that their remark is not OK.

And adults must stop reducing these statements to "boys being boys." When young men repeat ideas that justify abuse, it reflects what they've learned, not what they were born believing. Adults should clearly respond by explaining that violence is unacceptable and by clarifying why control, intimidation and harm are not signs of strength.

Teachers carry a unique responsibility because classrooms are where beliefs are often voiced for the first time. When comments that excuse abuse are ignored, they become part of the lesson. When they hear them, educators should make it clear that such views are unacceptable. A classroom should be a place of safety, not silence.

When you hear someone say, "Men have to show they run things sometimes," you can respond safely by speaking up, seeking help, or reporting the situation — because ignoring it allows the danger to persist and grow.

2
SHAKER
GSA
JOIN
GSA
GENDER SEXUALITY ALLIANCE
MEETS IN ROOM
135
3:15 - 4:00
"YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE QUEER TO BE HERE!"
EVERY
TUESDAY
AFTER SCHOOL
LGBTQ+ & ALLIES
QUESTIONS? GSA@SHAKER.ORG
Camryn Dozier

Elevator Fails for the ~~21,546th~~ 21,547th Time, to No One's Surprise

LEIO TREIER-JACKSON
Journalism II Reporter

In a bold act of consistency, the school's main elevator broke down Thursday morning, marking its third mechanical failure of the week and cementing its status as Shaker's second most reliable disappointment, behind the heat in the front hallway.

According to administrators, the elevator "entered an unresponsive emotional state" at approximately 8:22 a.m., shortly after being asked to carry two backpacks, a trombone and a single freshman who "looked at it weird."

School officials insist that the breakdown was unexpected, despite the elevator having broken down on Monday, Wednesday and any day involving rain, humidity or "bad vibes."

"I don't know what people expect," said the Assistant Administrative Adviser to the Elevator-Management Communications Vice Director. "This elevator was built to transport one adult male. Maybe. On a good day. Under strict supervision."

> "This elevator was built to transport one adult male. Maybe. On a good day. Under strict supervision."
>
> A.A.A.E.M.C.V.D.

There are three elevators in the building. Two of them travel to the second floor only, but students do not like to use them because "the emergency buttons look more worn than the floor select ones." The main elevator is the only one that goes to the third floor.

Some students are forced to attend inaccessible classes via Zoom meeting, where their faces are projected onto the smartboard of the classroom in full screen. "You get used to it after a while," said one teacher. "And it's like they're still here!"

Another teacher, whose classroom is on the third floor, is especially infuriated by the elevator's unpredictability. "If that thing won't drag my students up here, I'll do it myself!" she said.

Senior Administrative Assistant Laurie Brem has asked the principal to hire someone to send the emails regarding the elevator's operational status throughout the day — which is apparently not a responsibility of the Assistant Administrative Adviser to the Elevator-Management Communications Vice Director — because she needs time to make the announcements about the fire alarm.

Since the start of the 2025-26 school year, 14 emails have been sent to students and teachers to update them about whether or not they will be able to use the elevator that day. Three of those emails were sent on Dec. 1 alone. The four most recent elevator failure messages were sent Feb. 6, 10 and 11.

Maintenance staff report that the issue is "complicated and mysterious," citing that every time they fix one part, a new part immediately bursts into flames "out of spite."

Despite repeated complaints, the district has stated that replacing the elevator would be "very expensive," and that funding is currently allocated to a new football scoreboard capable of displaying emojis.

Administrators remain optimistic, assuring students that the elevator will be fully operational by tomorrow morning, barring unforeseen circumstances such as weather, time or existence itself.

Students, meanwhile, have already begun placing bets on how long it will take to break again, with most predicting "before second period."

This Time, Griffin to Lead From the Sidelines

New coach helped Raider football to a 10-0 mark in 1995

MAIZY MACHMER-WESSELS
Assistant Raider Zone Editor

The Raider football team has a new head coach, but he's not new to Shaker Heights.

Andre Griffin ('97) has returned to his alma mater to fill the head coach position vacated by Alex Nicholson, who resigned in November.

Griffin has more than 20 years of high school and college coaching experience. Most recently, he coached at Notre Dame Cathedral Latin High School, where the Lions posted an 8-4 record in 2025. Griffin taught sociology at during his first year there, then transitioned into a support staff position his second year.

At a Jan. 29 meet-the-coach event for the community, Griffin talked about his expectations going into next season, such as being mature and owning up to mistakes. "I say, keep it a hundred," he said. "Stand on your two feet. Stand on your own. Be a man."

Andre Griffin

As a high school athlete, Griffin excelled in track and field, basketball and football. In his sophomore year, the Raider football team went 6-4. His junior year, the Raiders were undefeated in the regular season, and as a senior, he was part of an 8-2 team. He played running back at The Ohio State University and graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology.

Athletic Director Michael Babinec said that he wanted to find a coach who understands what it means to be involved in Shaker Heights athletics. "It's not just about finding the right person. It's about finding the right fit for this community," he said.

Junior wide receiver Andy Berglund said that Griffin made a positive first impression. "He seems to be excited and determined to bring back Shaker football to where it was when he was playing here," he said.

Junior Jonah Lynch-Pitrof, a tight end, said that he is confident in Griffin's coaching abilities. "I believe Coach Griffin can bring a new culture into the program that can lead us to win games," he said. "Coach Griffin knows a whole lot about football and what it takes to win and to elevate to the next level. I believe he can pull the best out of this senior class."

Sophomore Daelin Thomas, an offensive lineman, said that he hopes the new coach can inspire players. "I'm hoping he can bring life to our team and help us win games. I think our team was missing a lot of hearts —I feel like there weren't many people on the team that wanted to win," he said.

New head football coach Andre Griffin speaks to community members in the large auditorium during a meet and greet event Jan. 30. A multi-sport athlete at SHHS and a member of successful Raider football teams, Griffin went on to play runningback at The Ohio State University. He has both high school and college coaching experience.

Andrew Mullen

After college, Griffin started his first career at Nationwide Insurance in Columbus. "It felt like 24 hours sitting at a desk. That's not the way I wanted to do life, so I got into coaching," Griffin said.

He said he plans to work in the high school next year in some capacity in addition to coaching.

Babinec said that as an alumnus, Griffin brings a valuable perspective to the role. "To welcome home an alum, an individual who passionately speaks about how Shaker helped shape him as a person and a professional is an absolute home run of a fit," he said. "When Coach Griffin speaks about the impact of Shaker and its ability to create a foundation for lifelong success, he is doing so with a firsthand knowledge of it having done that for him. That carries significant weight when that message is shared on the field, in the locker room, in the classroom and in the community when speaking with players, coaches, families and stakeholders."

"It's about restoring the glory of the football program, and so many people talked about finding somebody who understands what this place is about," he said. "We knocked it out of the park with Coach Griffin."

Outside of coaching, Griffin founded A Griffin Legacy Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides academic and athletic scholarships. Its Facebook bio reads, "Paying forward and helping youth experience life beyond the few blocks that they grew up on."

Griffin said that his father, who values giving back to the community, inspired him to start the foundation. He said that the community he grew up in also motivated him. "When I was in Lima, Ohio, kids didn't have a lot of money. So a way to give back, for me, is getting them in camps, giving them scholarships, things of that nature," Griffin said.

> **"One game at a time. One Play at a time. And then, things will take care of themselves at the end of the day."**
>
> Andre Griffin

Each year, Griffin selects two student athletes — one boy and one girl — to receive an athletic and academic scholarship, which includes a book stipend and $500.

Griffin called the organization "A Griffin Legacy Foundation" because his brothers and father all have names that start with the letter A. "It was named after my dad, Archie. Anthony was my older brother, Andre, me, [and] my younger brother, Adam," Griffin said.

Griffin's father, Archie Griffin, is a former NFL running back and OSU alumnus. He is the only player to have won the Heisman Memorial Trophy two times. He played for the Cincinnati Bengals and retired from his professional career after seven years in the NFL.

The Heisman Memorial Trophy is awarded annually to the most outstanding U.S. college football player; it recognizes exceptional performance, ability, diligence and integrity.

Griffin said that he doesn't see his dad through a lens of accomplishments. "It's great just to have a great dad. I don't look at him any other way than he's my dad. He supported us in whatever we wanted to do," he said.

As coach, Griffin plans to focus on "playing smart" and building trust between team members, he said. "You know, one game at a time, one play at a time and then, things will take care of themselves at the end of the day," he said. "When you trust each other — trust your brothers, who's on the sideline with you — you'll be able to get them to the next level."

CHRIS CUNNINGHAM

Q&A

How do you prepare mentally to guard the primary ball handler?

"We watch film every day, so, I know what the opponent likes and doesn't like to do. Also, there's always huge confidence in myself going into games that they can't score on me, at all."

What part of your game still doesn't get enough credit from people watching in the stands?

"I'm a vocal leader and when things aren't going great, I try to uplift my teammates and keep everyone's heads right."

How do you control tempo when the game starts speeding up?

"If I feel like the game is getting out of control and super fast, I make sure to slow us down and call one of our plays that forces us to move the ball around."

What footwork or positioning details matter most to you when staying in front of quicker guards?

"I try to stay pretty low to the ground so I'm really able to move as quick as they can. I might play off of him a little bit so he doesn't get a step on me."

What do you take most pride in defensively that doesn't show up in the box score?

"Disrupting the offense with pressure full court. It makes it a lot harder for the opponent to get into the offense they like to run."

Do you prefer to play man or zone defense? Why?

"I prefer man defense because we're a pretty athletic team compared to others and man defense results in us forcing a lot of turnovers."

SPENCER ZBANEK
Raider Zone Editor

Chris Cunningham is a junior guard on the men's basketball team. On Jan. 13 Cunningham hit his season-high 15 points in the Raiders 50-41 victory over Westlake. Cunnihgam is highly regarded due to his defensive skills. "He guards you like you took his bike," head coach Danny Young said. "He's very ferocious, intense and aggressive defensively." Cunningham picked up a season-high five steals in a 68-45 win against Brush Dec. 7. Young is hoping for Cunnigham to improve his shooting by his senior year. "I'd like to see him shoot around 35-38 percent from deep," said Young. "If he can get around that percent, he'll be scary next year."

By the #s

per game through 18 games

6.1
points

3.5
rebounds

2.0
assists

2.0
steals

JOELLE BURGE

SPENCER ZBANEK
Raider Zone Editor

Joelle Burge is a senior forward on the women's basketball team. Burge has faced two season-ending ACL tears in her time playing for the Raiders.

"Joelle returned each time with greater strength and a renewed determination to finish her career," head coach Gregory McIntosh said. During practice Burge focuses on mentoring younger players. "Joelle will take first-year player sophomore Rielle Stover to a side basket and work on layups and post moves while coach Parker works with the rest of the post players," McIntosh said. Burge stabilizes the team in high-pressure moments, McIntosh said. "Her emotional intelligence and composed demeanor provide a calming presence that grounds the team during adversity."

Q&A

Facing two ACL injuries during your time in high school, how has your approach to the game changed compared to earlier in your career?

"After two ACL tears, I have been playing more cautious that anything. I find myself not going in for as many rebounds and not driving to the basket as much because of the fear of retearing."

What did you learn about your own toughness during the time you couldn't play?

"I learned that I can trust myself to get through long uncomfortable processes and come out stronger at the end."

How do you lead differently on the court versus the locker room?

"On the court I lead by communicating on defense and offense with my voice. I lead in the locker room by keeping a focused environment with the team while also getting everyone hype for the games with my energy before."

What's the hardest drill you do that fans never see?

"The hardest drill that I do is 'full court X.' That drill helps with speed, reaction time and layups but is very tiring."

SHHS Athletics

By the #s

per game through 11 games

6.0
points

6.1
rebounds

2.0
assists

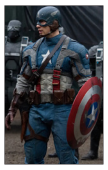
1.7
steals

THE SHAKERITE
Feb. 28, 2026
Volume 96, Issue 4

If Your History Teachers Were The Avengers

In The Shakerite's imagination, Hollywood is producing "The Avengers: SHHS Social Studies Edition." We asked four teachers to tell us what roles they would play and why. Can you match these teachers to the roles they chose for themselves?

a. Iron Man, because "I am deeply loyal to my friends and family, and enjoy taking on a mentorship or parental role for those I care about."



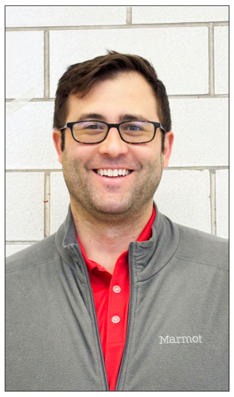
b. Capt. America, because "I will stand up to people and strive for what is right for others. Or maybe just because I teach history. Ha, ha."

c. Black Widow, because "I don't know anything about her."

d. Dr. Strange, because "I have no idea, I've never worn a cape. Might it be the hair?"

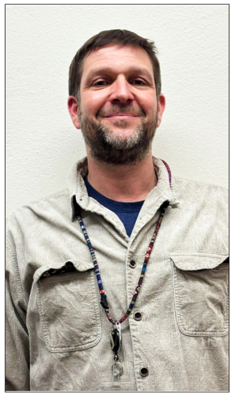
a Mr. B; b Ms. O'B; c Ms. E; d Mr. K

Mr. Konopinski



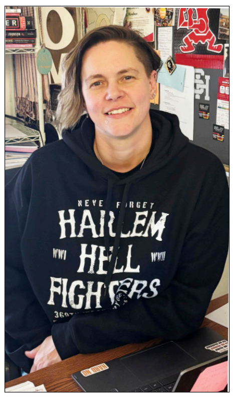
A B C D

Mr. Berger



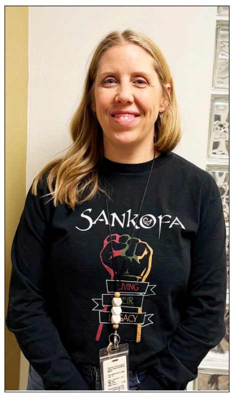
A B C D

Ms. O'Brien



A B C D

Ms. Ersek



A B C D

Bake This!

Shisma

Chocolate Chip Banana Walnut Bread

1. **Preheat** oven to 350 degrees.
Spray an 8x4 inch loaf pan with non-stick spray.

2. In a mixing bowl, **mash** 3-4 very ripe, peeled bananas.
Stir in 1/3 cup melted butter.

3. **Mix** in remaining ingredients: 3/4 cup sugar,
1 large egg, beaten; 1 teaspoon vanilla.

4. **Mix** in 1 and 1/2 cups flour.
Mix in a chocolate chips or nuts if you like.

5. **Pour** batter into prepared pan.

6. **Bake** for 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean (begin checking at 45 minutes).

7. **Remove** from the oven and allow to cool before serving.

SENIOR PROJECT COUNTDOWN

Checkout day is Friday, May 1.
As of Feb. 28:

62

days remain before the class of 2026 never attends another high school class.

OPS

THE
ONE-PAGE
SHAKERITE

Raider Rant

Dear Random College Emails

by Isabel Siegel

Wow! Random college I've never heard of, you're extending your deadline just for me? I have until midnight tonight? You're right, you are the perfect campus for me. I'm going to drop everything, rescind my other applications, and apply right now even though I've never heard of this school before, or opened a single one of your prior emails. Your message, one of 30 crowding my inbox, absolutely convinced me. Goodbye Brown, hello Upper Lower East West North Alabama School of Arts and Sciences. On a more serious note — colleges, please stop emailing me. Please. I beg.

Heard in the Halls

"Your backpack stresses me out."
Tuesday, Feb 10, 10th period.

"Pull your pants up."
Tuesday , Feb 10, 6th period

"Excuse me. Oh, sorry — I was just farting."
Wednesday , Feb 11, 4/5 period

Truth Social, in an Alternate Universe

The Super Bowl Halftime Show is absolutely amazing, one of the best, EVER! It makes so much sense, is an exaltation of the Greatness of America, and clearly represents our standards of Success, Creativity, and Excellence. Everybody understands what this guy is saying, and the dancing is so entertaining, especially for young children that are watching from throughout the U.S.A., and all over the World. This show is a blessing for our Country, which is increasingly struggling every single day — including the Worst Stock Market and 401(k)s in History! There is so much inspiration in this apotheosis of a Halftime Show and watch, it will get great reviews from the Real News Media, because they understand exactly what is going on in the REAL WORLD — And, by the way, the NFL should keep its brilliant new Kickoff Rule. MAKE AMERICA PUERTO RICAN AGAIN! President DONALD J. TRUMP.

L.M. Arias

Two Lies and a Truth, President's Day Edition

A. President William Howard Taft got stuck in his bathtub, and it took six people to get him out.

B. When President Theodore Roosevelt disagreed with peers, he would invite them to the boxing ring he installed in the White House and go a few rounds.

C. President Bill Clinton loved the film "Jurassic Park" so much that he decorated a room in the White House to celebrate the franchise.

a lie; b truth; c lie

Things That Appear Less Often Than Donald Trump in the Epstein Files

"The New York Times identified more than 5,300 files containing more than **38,000 references** to Mr. Trump, his wife, his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, and other related words and phrases in the latest batch of emails, government files, videos and other records released by the Justice Department." NYT/Feb. 1

By the #s

18,956
Harry Potter's name in all the books in the series

1,116
Times control + F finds "Jesus" in the Bible

9,096
Stars visible to the human eye without a telescope

11,000
Bird species on Earth, approximately

29,439
Population of Shaker Heights

THE SHAKERITE

February 28, 2026
Volume 96 | Issue 4

Editor in Chief *Isabel Siegel* • **Managing Editor** *Daniel Carroll* • **Design Managing Editor** Alison Teeter • **Assistant Design Editor** Jaryn Marcus • **Photo Editor** Camryn Dozier • **Copy Editors** *Natalie Better*, Claire Joyce • **Campus and City Editor** Vijaya Sadler • **Spotlight Editor** Lucas Tcheurekdjian • **Opinion Editor** *Leila Cohen* • **Raider Zone** Editor Spencer Zbanek • **Assistant Raider Zone Editor** Maizy Machmer-Wessels • **Policy Reporter** *Emma Barker* • **City Reporter** Cate Wanick • **Spotlight Reporter** Charlie Howell • **Student Activities Reporter** Lillian Pollino • **Opinion Writers** Gabe Moulthrop, Tate Polatz • **Raider Zone Reporters** Ezra Epstein, Graham Gurney, Andrew Mullen • **Adviser** Natalie Sekicky • Opinions expressed in The Shakerite are those of their respective authors and do not represent the views of The Shakerite, Shaker Heights High School or the Shaker Heights City School District. The 'Rite Idea presents the views of the Editorial Board; however, it may not reflect the opinion of the entire Shakerite staff. The Shakerite is an open forum published for and by students of Shaker Heights High School. Read The Shakerite online at shakerite.com. Readers may reach The Shakerite at (216) 295-6210 or by emailing editor@shakerite.com. The Shakerite newsroom is located in Room 231, Shaker Heights High School 15911 Aldersyde Drive Shaker Heights, OH 44120. Italics indicate Editorial Board member.